

Baltimore Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends
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Dear Jesse,

On January 3, 2021 you sent a letter to about 20 people in Baltimore Yearly Meeting. That letter has been very widely shared.

We are writing, as Clerks of BYM, with appreciation for your candor and directness. Thank you for your love and your long participation in BYM. Thank you for believing in us, and for caring enough to point out how our racism as an institution has injured you and so many others in our care.

You name that, although true for many mostly-white organizations in this country, BYM in particular has been guilty of leaning on “good intentions” rather than “direct action”. You remind us that direct action cannot rely on POC who have long been doing more than their share, and thereby are exhausted and discouraged. Your call for us as an organization to find our courage and step out in faith that we can, indeed, do this work is being heard.

Parts of what you are naming are being addressed by those caring for the camps, other parts by those caring for the staff, and all of what you have shared is being used to foster discussions in committees, Meetings, and among those of us tasked with leadership in an organization with both many moving parts, and much inertia.

We hear that our good intentions have not prevented harm - for that we apologize and pledge to right the wrongs where possible and prevent future harm as much as we are able.

We recognize that you are building a new life in the Bay Area, and wish you deep joy as Way Opens for you. We hear that you have no more words for us right now, but please know that we are willing to listen if you have more to share at any time.

As a member of our family, Jesse, you will always be welcome among us. With work and healing, our wish is that someday soon the gifts of our community will outweigh our failings and you will find this community a safe and joyful place to be, even if only to visit.

Steph Bean, Presiding Clerk
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